UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council welcomes progress made by Rwandan Government in reconciliation process; reaffirms important role played by UNAMIR in Rwanda and subregion.

* General Assembly takes up Secretary-General's report on work of Organization; United States introduces draft resolution aimed at reducing volume of paperwork.

* Struggle against poverty must be priority for all governments and peoples, Secretary-General says in message for International Day for Eradication of Poverty.

* Secretary-General travels from Argentina to Colombia to participate in Non-Aligned Movement Conference.

* Conventional Weapons Review Conference approves new Protocol banning use or transfer of blinding laser weapons; States parties to continue discussing land-mine issue next year.

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The Security Council today welcomed progress made by the Government of Rwanda in the reconciliation process, including the integration of more than 2,000 troops of the former Rwandan Government Forces (RGF) into the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA). In a statement by its President, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria), the Council called on the Government to intensify its contacts with all sectors of Rwandan society, except with those directly responsible for genocide. It reiterated its concern at reports of continuing cross-border infiltrations from neighbouring countries which had a destabilizing effect within Rwanda.

The Council again called on all States to act in accordance with the conclusion of the Summit Meeting held in Nairobi in January and the recommendations by the Regional Conference held in Bujumbura in February. It welcomed recent efforts to improve relations among States in the region, which should help pave the way for a Regional Conference on Peace, Security and Development. In that regard, the Council supported the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region.

(more)

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The Council reaffirmed the important role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in the country and the subregion. It underlined its commitment to UNAMIR, which assisted the Rwandan Government in facilitating the voluntary return and resettlement of refugees and had made available its engineering and logistics capacity. UNAMIR could effectively implement its current mandate only if it had an adequate force level and sufficient means. The Council was ready to study carefully any recommendations that the Secretary-General might make on the issue of force reductions in relation to the fulfillment of the Mission's mandate.

Genuine reconciliation and stability in the region could not be attained without the safe, voluntary and organized return of all Rwandan refugees, the Council said. It underlined the need for an effective national judiciary, and further underlined that the International Tribunal should begin its proceedings as soon as possible. The Council reaffirmed its concern at the appalling situation in Rwanda's prisons. It called on the international community to continue its assistance in that regard, and underlined the importance of parallel action by the Rwandan Government to restore the judicial system.

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The General Assembly today began its consideration of the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization, and took up a related draft resolution. By the terms of that draft, documents originating in the Secretariat for submission to the Assembly would, except in special cases, be limited to 16 pages or less. The Secretary-General would be requested to present oral, rather than written, reports where appropriate and to provide an oral estimate of the cost of any document or report requested by Member States when an intergovernmental body adopted a resolution containing such a request.

Introducing the draft resolution, the representative of the United States said it was necessary to reverse the tide of documents flooding the Organization. In the current biennium, it would cost $295 million to produce documents in New York and Geneva. The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) had special competence in the matters addressed by the draft resolution, and therefore the United States would propose to refer the text to it.

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The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty reflects the growing recognition that poverty is a global concern requiring global attention, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a message marking the observance of the Day, he said the struggle against poverty must be a central priority for governments and peoples everywhere. That priority

possessed more than a moral or ethical dimension -- it was a social, political and economic imperative for all humankind.

Non-governmental organizations, such as the ATD Fourth World Movement, had a vital role to play in that struggle, he continued. Such organizations reached out to people living in poverty, to the disadvantaged and marginalized, giving them a voice and ensuring their participation in economic, social and political life. The United Nations was ready to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, helping to ensure a common effort at all levels -- local, State, regional and international.

"On this Day, I call for solidarity among all the world's nations and peoples," the Secretary-General went on to say. "Only by strengthening the bonds of human solidarity can we free ourselves of the inhuman scourge of poverty and assure ourselves of a brighter future."

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The Secretary-General today travelled from Argentina to Colombia, where he will participate in the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement. Before leaving San Carlos de Bariloche, he had a number of bilateral meetings at the Summit Conference of Ibero-American Heads of State and Government.

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States parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons have approved a new Protocol banning the use or transfer of blinding laser weapons. They concluded their Review Conference in Vienna without agreement on a revised protocol on anti-personnel mines, but agreed to continue discussing land-mine questions next year.

The President of the Conference, Johan Molander (Sweden), said the adoption of the Protocol on blinding lasers was an important development in international law. The text prohibits the use against the naked eye, or the naked eye with corrective glasses, of all laser weapons which have blinding as one of their combat functions. It also prohibits transferring them to any State or non-State entity.

There was general agreement during the Conference that a strengthened land-mine Protocol should lead to a total ban on land-mines, and that detectable mines and self-destructing mines were preferable from a humanitarian standpoint. However, negotiations stalled around definitions of "detectability" and "self-destructing" mechanisms, and the amount of time that States parties should have to bring their mine stocks into line with the new specifications. * *** *